

**Town of St. Albans
Selectboard Special Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 25th, 2024
8 am**

On Thursday, January 25th, 2024 at 8:00 a.m. the Town of St. Albans Selectboard met at Town Hall for a special meeting.

Officials and Staff: Chair Bryan DesLauriers, Vice Chair Jack Brigham, Jonathan Giroux, Brendan Deso, Jeff Sanders, Town Manager Sean Adkins, Town Clerk Anna Bourdon, Director of Community Development Megan Sherlund, Public Safety Administrator Harold Cross, and Executive Assistant Jenn Gray.

Public in Attendance: Pat Vincent, Claire Langevin, Melody Martin, Dick Day, James Gallagher, Stan Dukas, Richard Swann, Melissa Montagne, Diane Montagne, David Bray, Michael Gawne, Mitch Montagne, David McWilliams, Mary Liscinsky, Bruce Cheeseman, Heather Smith, Jackie Brown, Bob Bourdon, Amanda Giroux, Kevin Lawler, and St. Albans Messenger Reporter Josh Ellerbrock.

Staff participating via Zoom: None.

Public Participation via Zoom: None.

B. DesLauriers called the meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. The purpose of the special meeting was to approve the fiscal year 2025 budget and ballot articles to be voted on at Town Meeting Day on Tuesday, March 5th, 2024.

Amendment to Agenda

MOTION: J. Brigham made a motion to include the item “Sale of The Former Town Hall” to the agenda. Seconded by J. Sanders. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Former Town Hall Sale

B. DesLauriers asked if there were any comments from the Board regarding adding the sale of the former Town Hall to the 2024 Town Meeting Day ballot. There were no comments from the Board at this time. B. DesLauriers asked for a motion to approve adding the article to the ballot.

B. DesLauriers asked for a motion to accept the purchase and sale agreement as presented. The floor was open for public comment.

David Bray came before the Board to ask about the disposal of excess Town property reading from the Disposal of Assets Policy, stating that the Town should get the highest value/return on the disposal of an asset. He also pointed out that some of the Selectboard members should recuse themselves because they have an interest in their children attending the school that would be in the former Town Hall.

Pat Vincent lives next to the Town Hall. She explained she is very disappointed in the Selectboard and shared her concerns regarding St. Mary’s moving into the old Town Hall. She demanded an 8’ fence to surround the property. She stated the Town Hall building should go to the highest bidder which at this time is Mitch Montagne.

David McWilliams came before the Board to ask if there is more than one buyer who had put in a bid and what is the sewer system like for the former Town Hall building.

Michael Gawne, attorney for Mitch Montagne came before the Board regarding Mr. Montagne’s offer to purchase the former Town Hall. Mr. Gawne provided a letter to the Board. Mr. Gawne wanted all proposals for the Town Hall to be considered. He suggested the Board run Article 4 by the Town’s attorney.

Mitch Montagne spoke to the Board explaining how he came about putting an offer on the former Town Hall and what happened after St. Mary’s put in a bid.

Harold “Bob” Cross came before the Board to discuss the policies written and approved by the Selectboard, especially the Disposal of Assets Policy.

Stan Dukas came before the Board and shared his concern with the lack of transparency with the public regarding the funding of nonprofit requests within the budget.

Bruce Cheeseman came before the Board and to ask how we went from negotiating a lease to giving the Town Hall property away.

Bob Bourdon came before the Board to asked if the Selectboard had any children or grandchildren attending a Catholic school. He asked why we are not having a public discussion regarding the Town Hall property.

Heather Smith came before the Board to clear up some things regarding St. Mary's and how the bid came about. Been working on this for four years. Inquired about the Town Hall on December 14th.

Kevin Lawler came before the Board asking why the meeting is at 8am. B. DesLauriers explained that usually the meeting is 15 minutes to approve the budget and ballot articles. Driven by the budget and not the sale article.

Pat Vincent stated she is not against the Catholic school. She said they never came to her and she's the next door neighbor. She has contacted the Governor's office.

Dick Day came before the Board and stated he was out of the loop on this deal, but asked what the appraised value was on the building. S. Adkins stated it is \$320,000.

B. DesLauriers explained there were public meetings at the former Town Hall asking what should be done about the former Town Hall. He then went through the timeline.

J. Brigham stated that Mr. Montagne came to him asking what he thought about purchasing the Town Hall. He went through his own timeline regarding the sale of the former Town Hall and stated it was not deliberate to hide this from anybody.

J. Sanders shared his comments regarding the sale of the former Town Hall and his timeline and recollection of the whole process and how the best way to do this is to leave it up to the voters to decide, which is what the Board is doing.

Melissa Montagne came before the Board to state that she has a child that wouldn't be allowed at the St. Mary's School because of a disability. Also, both the offer to lease and the offer to buy should be on the ballot.

B. Deso explained that this meeting and the process that lead to it has been the most convoluted process he has experienced and went over his understanding of the timeline to sell the former Town Hall. B. Deso suggested speaking to the Town Attorney and putting both offers on the primary ballot in August. S. Adkins stated that the Town Attorney had explained to him the Town may legally do this.

Amanda Giroux came before the Board asked if what the Town was going to do with the Town Hall be on the ballot? B. DesLauriers stated that yes. B. Deso explained there are two ways, notice to the public and a petition driving a special election.

There were more public comments. The Board agreed to seeking more advice from the Town's Attorney and hold a special meeting on Monday, January 29th at 5:30 p.m.

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to table Article 4 until the special Selectboard meeting on Monday, January 29th at 5:30 p.m. Seconded by B. Deso. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Former TH Sale: 1 hr., 38 mins.

Town Meeting Day Warning

Article 1

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve Article 1, the election of officers, as presented. Seconded by J. Brigham. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Article #2

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to approve Article 2, the Fiscal Year 2025 budget in the amount of \$7,159,755 with \$6,378,475 to be raised by taxes. Seconded by B. Deso. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Article #3 & Article #4

These articles were skipped.

Article #5

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to remove Article 5 from the 2024 Town Meeting Day ballot. Seconded by J. Sanders. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Article #3

MOITION: J. Giroux made a motion to add the \$500,000 from Article 5 to Article 3 for the amount up to \$600,000. B. Deso seconded. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

TMD Warning: 10 mins.

Adjournment

MOTION: J. Giroux made a motion to adjourn the Selectboard meeting at 9:59 a.m. Seconded by J. Sanders. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Jenn Gray Executive Assistant